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SUBJECT: No Consensus On Somali Outflows to Kenya

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CLASSIFIED BY: Earl Zimmerman, Refugee Coordinator, DOS, POL; REASON:
1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Increased conflict and the disruption of humanitarian assistance in Somalia are expected to increase outflows of Somalia refugees to Kenya. There is no agreement among UN agencies on the number of additional Somalis that could seek to enter Kenya over the next three months as estimates range from WFP's "worst case" scenario of 150,000 to UNHCR's "most likely" scenario of 12,000. UNHCR has reportedly received authorization from the Garissa County Council to expand the Ifo camp, but has yet to secure funding for the expansion. UNHCR discussions with the GOK on a fourth Dadaab camp remain stalled. UNHCR and WFP will conduct a contingency planning meeting in Nairobi on February 3-5 during which we expect a planning number for outflows will be agreed upon. End Summary

Food and Conflict to Swell Refugee Flows Into Kenya

¶2. (SBU) UNHCR reported that 55,658 Somali refugees were registered in the Dadaab camps in 2009 with 21,621 (or 39 percent) of the year's total arriving in the January to March time period. In the first eleven days of January 2010, UNHCR reported only 976 new Somali refugee arrivals registering in Dadaab - well below last year's arrival rate of almost 2,000 new arrivals per week. UNHCR believes that some of the decreased flows are because single males are reportedly being prevented by al Shabaab forces in Somalia from crossing the border into Kenya. UNHCR-Kenya also believes the deployment of additional Kenyan security forces to the border area and detention of single males who cross into Kenya by Kenyan security forces are also restricting the flow of refugees. (Note: UNHCR reports it has regular access to Somali male asylum seekers detained by Kenya security forces. End Note). Some areas of south-central Somalia have experienced good rains and are starting to harvest crops, thus diminishing the numbers of those fleeing Somalia due to drought and failed crops, at least in the short-term.

¶3. (SBU) Despite fewer new Somali refugee registrations in Dadaab than last year, UN agencies and others (Reftel C) fear the disruption of humanitarian assistance and increased conflict in Somalia could swell Somali refugee flows over the next few months. WFP had been providing food assistance to almost half (3.8 million) of the estimated Somali population of 7.5 million. On January 1, 2010, however, WFP suspended food deliveries to an estimated 900,000 Somalis (22 per cent of the estimated 3.8 million Somalis

receiving food assistance in Somalia targeted by WFP under its emergency operations) due to deteriorating security conditions and al Shabaab prohibitions on WFP food distribution programs in areas it controls. WFP believes those Somalis who cannot rely on the current crop harvest will exhaust their food stocks within a few weeks following the cessation of food deliveries leaving no choice but for them to migrate in search of food. WFP is currently working with an unofficial figure of 150,000 Somalis who could leave Somalia due to food disruption, but does not want to commit to a more concrete estimate until the contingency planning meeting scheduled for the first week of February (see paragraph 7).

14. (C) Sporadic fighting continues in Mogadishu and in south-central Somalia - areas where most Somalis fleeing into Kenya originate. UNHCR reports that 1.5 million Somalis are internally displaced (approximately 20 percent of the estimated 7.5 million Somalis in Somalia) with about 1.0 million of them displaced due to fighting in Mogadishu. UNHCR estimates that 650,000-700,000 displaced Somalis are sheltering in internally displaced camps in the Afgooye corridor outside Mogadishu with another 400,000 Somalis sheltering in pockets throughout south central Somalia and with Puntland and Somaliland hosting approximately 250,000 and 60,000 displaced Somalis, respectively. WFP reports it continues to try to provide food to approximately 500,000 Somalis in the Afgooye corridor, but it has discontinued food distributions to the 30,000

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displaced Somalis in the Afmadow area outside Kismayo. The GOK reports that its much-postponed offensive in the southern Somali region of Juba (Reftel B and previous) now has been pushed back to March. While the GOK continues to reevaluate the offensive in light of logistical problems and international criticism of the plan, GOK military officials appear intent on continuing with it. The humanitarian assistance community remains concerned that any increase in military activity in southern Juba will only increase the number of Somalis seeking refuge in Kenya, especially as fighting may further displace the estimated 30,000 Somalis already displaced in Afmadow.

No Consensus on Outflow Projections

15. (SBU) While UN agencies are aware of growing pressures on Somalis to move (Reftel C), there is no agreement among humanitarian agencies on the scale of the possible increased outflows. UNHCR-Kenya has planned for between 60,000 - 80,000 Somalis seeking refuge in Dadaab in 2010 (roughly the same as arrived in 2009). UNHCR-Kenya speculates, however, that if violence increases and food aid is disrupted, as many as 100,000 Somalis above the planned flow could seek entry into Kenya. UNHCR-Somalia, in its "worst case" scenario predicts that up to 480,000 Somalis could be displaced over the next three months due to violence and food aid disruptions (120,000 due to food insecurity and 360,000 because of increased violence) with 39,000 of the displaced seeking entry to Kenya. In its "most-likely" scenario, however, UNHCR-Somalia estimates 120,000 Somalis will be displaced over the next three months (30,000 displaced because of food aid disruptions and 90,000 displaced because of violence) with only 12,000 Somalis above the planned refugee flow seeking entry to Kenya.

16. (C) In October, WFP-Somalia projected as many as 160,000 Somalis could seek to leave Somalia within a few months of food aid being discontinued, with the majority of those expected to enter Kenya (Reftel D). Since October, however, WFP reports that because

of plentiful rains and an expected good harvest in January and February many fewer Somalis then previously feared may be forced to leave Somalia. A recent WFP-Kenya 'worst-case" scenario (Reftel A) predicts that up to 140,000 Somalis may leave Somalia for Kenya within the next few months due to disruptions in food deliveries. NGOs have also reported their own assessments of the number of possible refugee outflows to Kenya. The International Rescue Committee, for example, is planning for up to 10,000 additional beneficiaries in the next three months for its activities in Hagadera camp and MSF (Medicins San Frontieres) estimates 20,000 Somalis above "normal" could enter Kenya due to food aid disruptions. Save the Children - UK in Dadaab reports that they are basing their contingency plans for possible increased outflows on WFP's report of 9,800 households on the Kenya-Somali border (approximately 60,000 Somalis) who, with the suspension of food aid, could find it easier to enter Kenya than travel further north into Somalia in search of food. (Note: WFP estimates that the maximum population of Somalis living along the Kenya border affected by its suspension of food aid is between 125,000 - 150,000. End Note). The difficulty in estimating outflows is highlighted by the fact that UNHCR is waiting for WFP to provide the number of Somalis affected by food disruptions, while WFP is waiting for UNHCR to assess how many Somalis in al Shabaab areas are likely to move to areas where they could access food.

The Need for Contingency Planning

17. (SBU) Neither UNHCR-Kenya nor UNHCR-Somalia have adequate contingency plans or stocks in place should there be a significant increase in refugee movements over the next three months. Both

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offices point to a scheduled February 3- 5 contingency planning meeting in Nairobi (with WFP participating on February 3 only) when it is expected that agreement will be reached on a planning figure for above "normal" outflows and the additional resources needed to accommodate them. WFP currently has a four month food buffer in Dadaab that could be drawn upon to feed an increased flow of refugees, but cautions it would need to replace the food quickly in order to feed a larger population in Dadaab. WFP has said it has some flexibility to respond to outflows by drawing down food stocks from their Kenya drought operations or by reducing ration levels should the need arise.

18. (SBU) UNHCR-Kenya has received authorization from the Garissa County Council (GCC) to expand the severely overcrowded Ifo camp. UNHCR has asked the GCC to send an official as soon as possible to begin demarcating the expanded camp boundaries, but doesn't have the funding in its current budget to prepare the land for habitation or relocate refugees from the Ifo camp to the expanded area. UNHCR-Kenya estimates that the expanded area may accommodate between 60,000-80,000 refugees, and it expects to resettle 20,000 refugees from the current Ifo camp with the rest of the area reserved for new arrivals and some small relocations from the Dagahaley camp. UNHCR has only budgeted for the existing camps and is unsure how it will fund the expansion, but speculates it will receive an allocation from the UNHCR Reserve Fund or will launch an appeal once the cost of the expansion is known (UNHCR will develop a budget for the expansion after the land is demarcated).

19. (SBU) UNHCR-Kenya has consistently said obtaining a fourth camp remains essential to accommodating refugees in Dadaab, but confirms that its negotiations with the GOK for the fourth camp has

stalled. UNHCR reports the total number of refugees in Dadaab to be about 266,000 vice the 300,000+ it had reported earlier in the year following a just-completed re-verification exercise (a census of the camp population). UNHCR attributes the decrease in the camp population to the relocation of 13,000 Somali refugees to Kakuma camp in north west Kenya earlier in 2009 and speculates that the "missing" refugees either returned to Somalia or left the camps for Nairobi. Even with the lower number of refugees in the camps and the extension of Ifo, UNHCR says it still requires a fourth camp in Dadaab to accommodate the "normal" outflow of refugees. If increased outflows were to occur over the next few months, UNHCR plans to locate the new arrivals to the Ifo expansion area and continue pressing for the fourth camp to accommodate the projected "normal" flow of 60,000 - 80,000 refugees expected in 2010. As part of the contingency planning exercise, UNHCR will include a review of its political strategy with the GOK to obtain the fourth camp and preserve asylum space for Somali asylum seekers.

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